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RABID RACCOON FOUND IN VALRICO

Contact:

Kevin Watler
Public Information Officer
Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County
kevin.watler@flhealth.gov
(813) 559-4065



Hillsborough County, FL- A raccoon in the area of Laurel Pointe Drive in Valrico is the first confirmed case of rabies for 2020 in Hillsborough County. No rabies alert has been issued since this is a single case found in wildlife. However, this incident on January 25, serves as a reminder to ensure pets are up-to-date on rabies vaccination. It should be expected that there is always some level of the virus in our wildlife population.

Shortly after a man let his two vaccinated dogs out, he heard yelping. When he went to check, a raccoon was on the back of one of his dogs. He isn't sure if his other dog was also attacked. As a precaution, both dogs will receive boosters and quarantined for 45 days. The man was bitten and scratched when he separated the raccoon from his dog. He is being treated for his exposure.

DOH-Hillsborough is notifying all homes within a 500-foot radius of where the raccoon was found.

An animal with rabies could infect other wild animals or domestic animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies.

People should avoid contact with any animal that lives in the wild, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats, and coyotes. Some may be tempted to feed or help the animal, but it isn't worth the risk. The only definitive way to determine if an animal has rabies is a lab examination.

Anyone who has been bitten, scratched, or exposed to the saliva of any wild animal or an animal that is acting unusual should always report the exposure to the local health department. Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans.

In 2019, Hillsborough County identified only one rabid animal, which was a raccoon in the Riverview area. One dog was exposed during that incident.

In 2018, Hillsborough County identified 10 rabid animals (six cats, two bats and two raccoons) that exposed 20 people and five domestic dogs to the disease.

Despite the decrease in cases, there are rabid animals living throughout the county and state.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8059.
- **Do not** handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- **Never** adopt wild animals or bring them into your home.
- Teach children **never** to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas, where they might come in contact with people and pets.
- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and report the injury to the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8059.

For further information on rabies, go to <http://hillsborough.floridahealth.gov/> or call the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8000, or Hillsborough County Pet Resource center at (813) 744-5660.

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